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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT Wednesday, December 2, 1936

(FOR BROADCAST USE ONLY)

Subject: "MORE QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, United States Department of Agriculture.

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Continuing Christmas-shopping questions from where we left off yesterday brings us back to the lady who inquired about kitchen utensils for Christmas gifts. Yesterday we took up some points about good buys in knives, bowls, egg-beaters, and measuring cups and spoons. Today the kettles and pans come up for consideration.

The materials of today's cooking containers range all the way from old-fashioned iron and tin to the familiar aluminum and enamelware and the more recent stainless steel and lined-copper kettles. The material you choose depends on the use to be made of the kettle, the price you want to pay, as well. as other special considerations.

Aluminum utensils have been popular ever since they came on the market because they never rust and are good conductors of heat. By the way, that false rumor about any possible dangers from cooking in aluminum was exploded long ago. Aluminum's only disadvantage is that it will stain or darken with alkalis. But such stains are easy to remove either by scouring or by cooking some acid food like tomatoes in the kettle. You can buy aluminum in various weights from the extremely heavy cast aluminum to the almost paper-thin weight. In general the medium-weights of stamped aluminum are best for all-around purposes. They are less expensive than cast aluminum and they are light and easy to handle. Of course, an aluminum frying pan that is not heavy enough will warp in the center. The very thin aluminum is all right for molds and cookie-cutters but won't stand up under heat or heavy wear. Food scorches easily in such thin containers and they soon dent or crumple out of shape. When you are buying aluminum, it pays to buy a good grade.

Now about enamelware. This has the advantage of being light to handle as well as attractive in appearance. And the glazed surface of good quality enamelware resists stains from acids and alkalis and is easy to wash. Though enamelware absorbs heat easily it does not conduct it evenly. That is why food is inclined to scorch on the bottom of enamelware kettles unless you watch it carefully. This ware is especially good for saucepans and double boilers to use for making cream sauce or custard sauce because it will not give these light foods a dark color, as stained aluminum might.

As for the older materials for pots and pans -- tin and iron, they still are good sellers on the market. Lightweight tin is still a favorite for baking pans. Tin itself does not rust, but when the tin plate wears or is scratched off, the iron underneath will rust.

Iron, because it is durable and such a good conductor of heat, is still a favorite for Dutch ovens and skillets. It has the disadvantage of being heavy and awkward to handle and of rusting. But iron improves with age, a rather unusual characteristic.

Stainless steel is a combination of steel, nickel and chromium now made into many kinds of cooking utensils. It has many excellent qualities. It conducts heat well and evenly, browns food evenly, withstands high temperatures, doesn't dent easily with wear and doesn't stain or corrode. But it is expensive unless you are making a lifetime purchase of kitchenware.

As for copper, it is another good conductor of heat, but it requires regular and eternal polishing. Most copper utensils on the market today are lined with tin or chromium.

So much for the materials of your Christmas pots and pans. Now just one point about their shape. A straight-sided utensil with a flat bottom that covers the heating unit is the one that saves fuel. As for size, most kitchens need several sizes in kettles and saucepans to suit varying amounts of food as well as different-size burners on the stove.

That finishes the kitchen-questions for the day. Now to answer the lady who asks about buying Christmas blankets.

When you go to shop for blankets, W is your guiding letter. W stands for warmth, wear, and weight -- all important points to consider. And W also stands for weave and width. (You want a blanket wide and long enough for comfort.)

What makes a blanket warm? Answer: Its power of keeping out cold. So its fiber and its weave and nap all count in warmth. So the textile people at the Bureau of Home Economics advise: "When looking for warmth, look for blankets with the highest percentage of good-quality wool in the price range you desire. Be sure to read carefully the label on blankets of mixed fibers, such as cotton and wool, and learn how much of each fiber has been used. The percentage of wool is some indication of the warmth of a blanket." Now about the fluffiness or nap of a blanket. Says the leaflet: "While napping makes a blanket a better insulator in one respect, it may also lower its power to resist wind. So blankets to use indoors may be more loosely woven and heavily napped than those to use out of doors and without other covers."

As for weave as it affects warmth and wear, I'll quote once more: "Hold the blanket up to the light to examine the closeness and eveness of the weave. If the cloth seems sleazy and thin in places, it is probably too loosely and openly woven to be very warm." Also a weave that is too sleazy and loose won't give wear.

How long a blanket wears depends partly on the fiber used -- blankets that contain some cotton are more durable than all-wool blankets, for example. Wear also depends on the weave and the way the blanket is washed and cared for. Wash is another important W in the blanket problem, but that's a matter we'll consider on another day.

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